

## The Good, the Bad and the Beautiful

# Manufactured Idols

This is the third in a six-part series about be-  
~~autiful~~ Hollywood excerpted from  
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The New Hollywood didn't invent the idea of creating idols to order for the preadult market.

Times had changed, but the made-to-order instant heroes of Today all seemed to have been stamped out of a mold developed back in the fifties.

Put them in tight pants and cut-down-to-the-belly-button shirts, set them upon a stage and turn them on, and they were all guaranteed to shake, rattle, and roll or your money back.

Bob Marcucci served as Gepetto to Fabian Forte and Frankie Avalon, two handsome young men who got paid while they learned to sing on key for audiences of the late 1950s.

Other sharp promoters did it with other pretty boys, with Bobby Rydell and Bobby Vee and Ricky Nelson.

Supersharper, one-time carnival show operator Colonel Tom Parker primed and packaged a country boy from Memphis named Elvis Presley and turned him into the most salable commodity in show business.

The New Hollywood referred to Elvis in reverence as the progenitor of the rock 'n' roll revolution that swept the world in the fifties and brought the surging new sexuality to the pop music field whose influence was still being felt two decades later.

Because Elvis was the one who survived while all the rest faded into oblivion as yesterday's heroes, because Elvis made the transition from swivel-hipped wonder to headline champion, he's the one whom the manufactured idols of Today turned on to. It was he they looked upon as a god in whose image they wanted to be created.

David Cassidy could look up — and he frequently did — to the shimmering example of professional longevity set by Elvis.

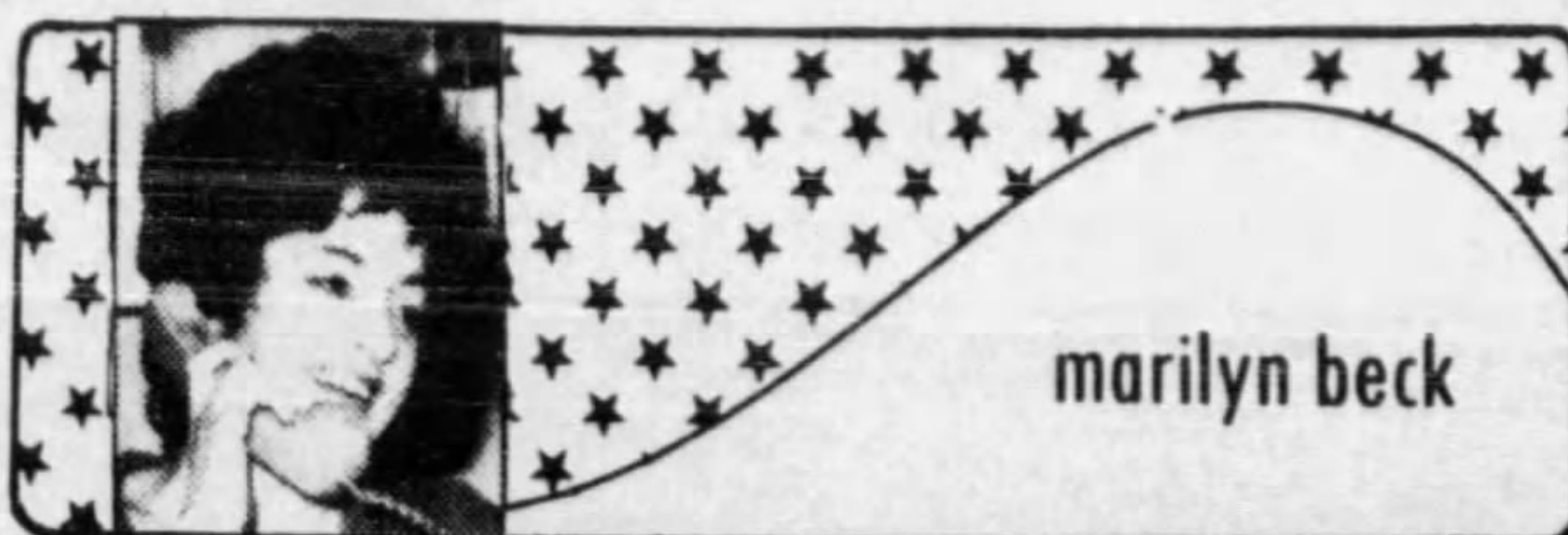
He could look down — and he had occasion to do that often, too — at the sad examples set by those teenybopper idols who preceded him in glory as Screen Gems Studios' own specially packaged version of the Manufactured Doll.

All the other Screen Gems products — Bobby Sherman of "Here Come the Brides" fame, and Micky Dolenz, Davy Jones, Mike Nesmith, and Peter Tork of "The Monkees" — had been relegated to the cast-off shelf reserved for washed-up rock wonders whose TV shows go off the air.

David Cassidy was determined that such a fate wouldn't await him. He was going to move up, not down.

He'd show the world he was more than the shallow, simple, young teenage type he portrayed each week as the oldest son of ABC's "Partridge" clan.

His campaign to act all grown-up began in the spring of 1972, and before he knew it he was suddenly Peck's Bad Boy around the studio. "I got them all shook up just because I started to let people know I'm for real."



Shook up was a mild understatement for the attitude of ABC network executives and Screen Gems' brass who reacted to David's big-boy behavior.

They were referring particularly to an interview with David that appeared in the May 1972 issue of Rolling Stone magazine.

The pictures used to accompany the article displayed David's nude body exposed all the way down to the first, faint vision of pubic hair where — much to the frustration of his worshipers — the art had been delicately cropped.

Quotes in the article became the talk of the town.

Shattering the virginal image of the young hero forever, one of Cassidy's girlfriends informed the reporter that he was good in bed.

And from David himself came the confession that he had been seeing a psychiatrist since age 14 when he had been experimenting with drugs.

The 22-year-old Cassidy recalled his not-so-distant youth for the magazine. "I didn't know who I was. And I did a lot of experimenting — not smack, but grass and speed and psychedelics. I had some bad trips — tripping for kicks to the worst, most paranoid places."

When the article appeared, it just about broke the hearts of the studio brass who'd been molding his career.

David made it clear he appreciated the devotion of all those little girls who had made his concerts sellouts, but he was determined he would not be a love object who failed to provide for the inevitable rainy day when America's little darlings regrouped around next year's version of the teenybopper delight.

With the encouragement of

a management team headed by Ruth Aarons and publicist Jim Flood, David continued to take what he referred to as "a ballsy stand."

My curiosity peaked by the New David Cassidy, I phoned to the studio to request a luncheon meeting with their young money maker.

I was assured that David did not want to discuss "that story". Being young and impetuous, he had simply made a mistake in judgment, I was informed, and one that he wouldn't repeat.

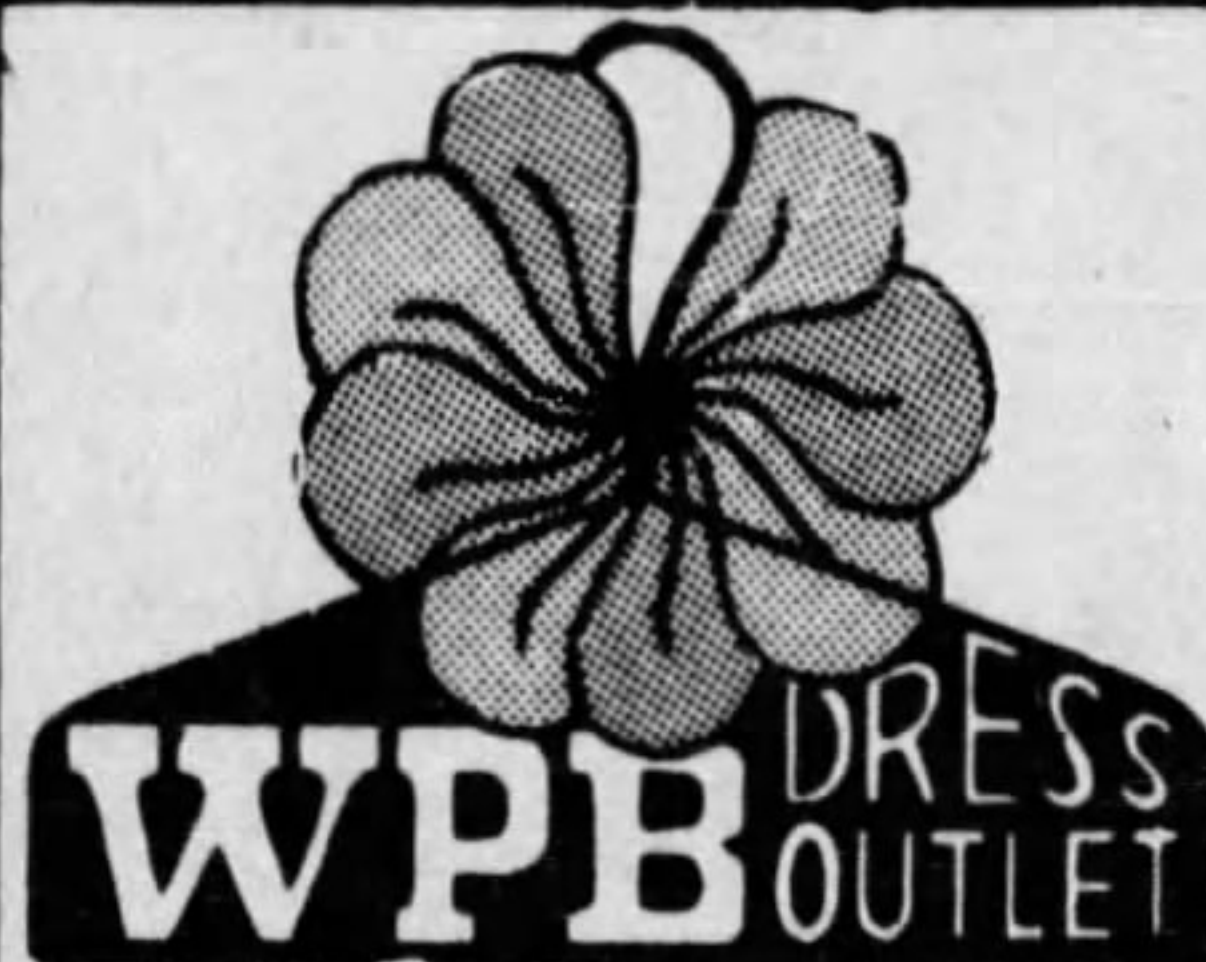
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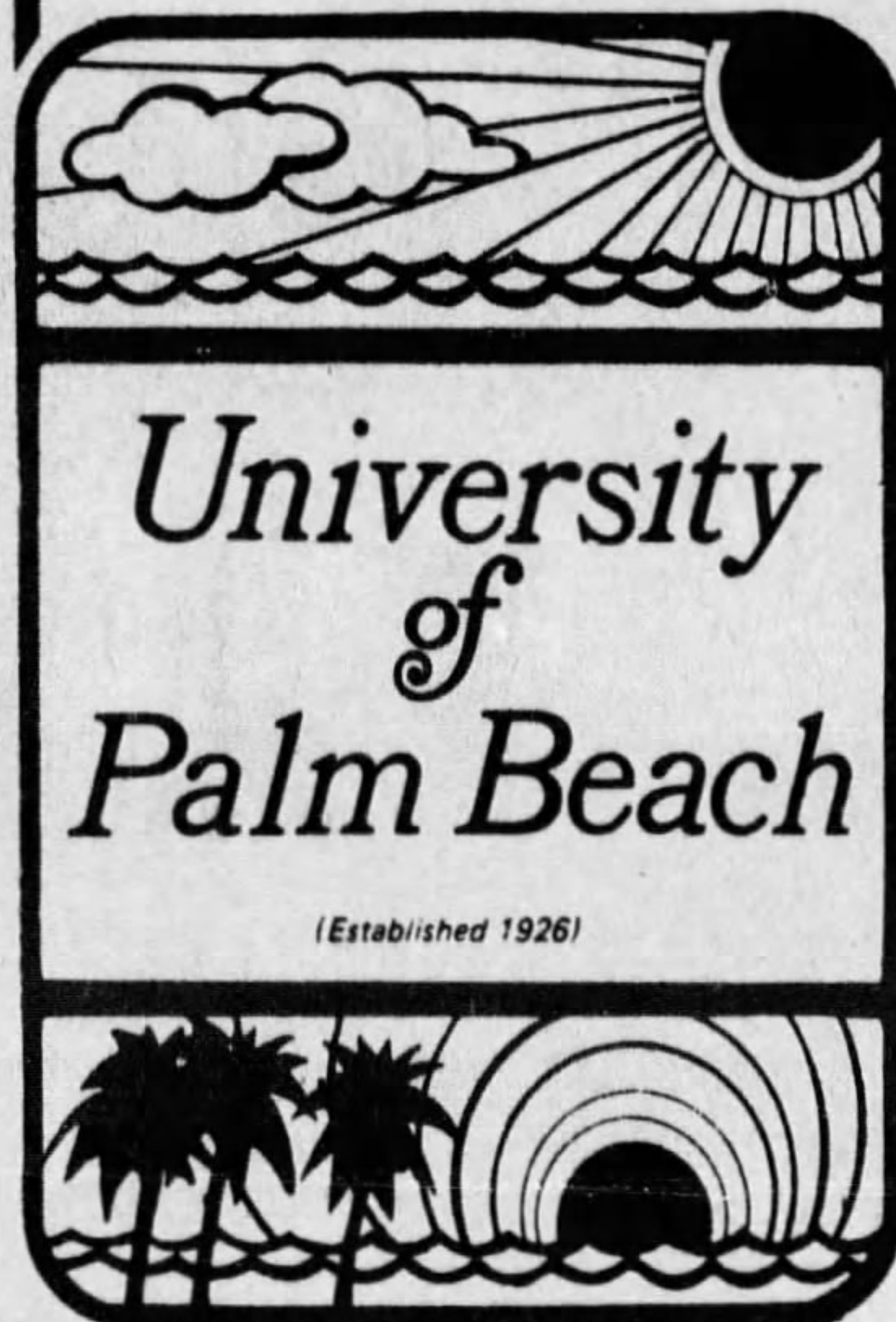
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